

Mc Dougall's Good Stories for Children

Japanese Superstitions Upset by a Boy Who Spent Enough Time in America to Learn the Truth About Evil Spirits

TOMOYO SHAMAKIRA was a Japanese boy, who, when a few years old, was carried out to sea in a small boat and afterward picked up by an American whaling-ship which took him to New Bedford, where he remained until he was fourteen years old, when he went back to Japan and soon reached his own home in the province of Hiizen.

Now, as you may well imagine, Tomoyo had learned many things while in America that made him far different from all the other Japanese lads, and among them was the fact that there is no such thing as a demon or a witch. But, on the other hand, he had forgotten that all the Japanese children believe fervently in all such things, for, while he had been learning to read and write, as well as studying about electricity, chemistry and physiology, all these things had been driven out of his mind.

After his parents had recovered from their first feelings of delight and astonishment they began to ask all manner of questions of their much-traveled son, and many were the expressions of amazement they let escape when they fully realized what he had seen and learned. Finally his father declared: "You have certainly been under the protection of O-Kuni-Nushi the Guardian! We feared that the Kappa had got you, for we knew that you had been in the boat on the river."

"But tell me," exclaimed Tomoyo, "what is a Kappa?"

"What, have you forgotten all that you knew when a child?" asked his mother. "Do you not remember how frightened you were when it was said that the Kappa was abroad?"

"No, I guess I have forgotten all about the gentleman," replied Tomoyo.

"Dear, dear, how surprising!" cried Grandpa Shamakira. "He will have to learn all over again. The Kappa is a dreadful monster, a deadly and terrible creature that dwells in lakes and rivers. It has the body of a ten-year-old child, but is covered with hair like a monkey. Its eyes are bright and piercing, and it can talk just as we do, although it is not human. It has a cavity in its skull like a cup which is always filled with water, and it comes out from the river at night to steal melons and egg fruit."

"What a strange taste!" cried Tomoyo, laughing. "Do not laugh," said his Grandpa, solemnly, looking quite pained and shocked. "The Kappa is no laughing matter, let me tell you! You might meet him!"

"What will he do to me?" asked the boy. "He invites me to wrestle with him, and, puny as he is, he always overcomes me unless it happens that the water in his skull-cup be spilled, when all his strength fades away instantly. But to defeat him is as bad as to be defeated, for the result is loss of reason and a gradual wasting away. This river-urchin, for that's what Kappa means, will also attack people in boats and suck their blood; therefore we feared that he had caught you. Up in the Uma district he comes every year and claims two victims; and this is proved, for two people every year, out of all who bathe in the lake, fall sick and waste away in pining and sorrow."

"Maybe they have malaria," said Tomoyo, who refused to take the Kappa as seriously as the rest of the family. "Besides, who ever saw it, I'd like to know?"

His father, with a pale face that showed great fear at his son's bold words, got up at once and going to the door quickly hung up a crab's shell over the lintel, which is supposed to avert evil luck in Japan just as a horseshoe was once supposed in our own land to perform the same kind office.

When Tomoyo asked to have this action explained, the whole family was almost in tears over his dreadful ignorance of the most necessary things.

"It is pitiful," said his mother, "and more than that, it is dangerous, for the boy, now that he is big and strong, may venture into fearful danger without being prepared by the proper charms and incantations, and, maybe, come to some dreadful end. Yet, it is very late to begin to teach a child things which he should have learned even as a little walked. I fear he will never acquire knowledge."

Tomoyo was beginning to worry, thinking that perhaps there really was a chance of his failing to learn all Japanese knowledge, and he asked:

"Who can teach me these things, and what are the dangers that are to be feared and avoided? I have been in many different kinds of danger already."

"They are very numerous, indeed," replied Grandpa Shamakira. "First, you might, unless warned, touch a sessho-seki, or death-stone."

"Never heard of one," said Tomoyo, carelessly.

"See! Ah, what awful danger he is in!" cried his mother.

"That is a stone which has been bewitched by a fox. Any living thing that touches it will perish!" added Grandpa, solemnly.

"Ha, ha! Bewitched by a fox?" cried Tomoyo. "Why, I had to have a tame fox. He followed me like a dog."

All the family shrank back and looked at him horrified and frightened.

After a moment his father said, slowly: "Perhaps it that far-away, strange land the curse may not work. He seems to be perfectly healthy."

"Or, maybe, somehow, foxes are different there," added Grandpa, looking carefully at the boy, for such a strange thing was unheard of as a boy having companionship with a fox, an animal dreaded and feared more than any other, unless it be a badger.

"They are just exactly the same, and I am going to get one here as soon as I can catch a cub," declared Tomoyo.

"Let us go to the good Shinto priest with him!" said his father, and so in a sort of sad and solemn procession they marched to the temple, a beautifully carved building standing amid great gnarled trees and surrounded by a lovely garden in which thousands of flaming chrysanthemums grew. When the old priest, Yorimasa, heard of Tomoyo's ignorance he held up his hands in pious alarm, and said:

"Dear! Dear! What shall we do! He is already



The Picture Taken Just as the Tengu Seized the Girl

almost a man and knows nothing of the perils surrounding us!"

"Yes, Father Yorimasa, he probably does not even know what a badger is," said Mr. Shamakira, tearfully.

"Well, that's what we boys used to call cats in America," said Tomoyo.

The old priest shuddered and said:

"The badger is not as dangerous as the fox, my son. The badger plays many a sad trick on us, but he is rarely dangerous. He turns himself into a teapot under our noses, or goes about on moonlight nights beating a tattoo on his paunch like a drummer, or knocking at doors to frighten lonely women into fits, as well as throwing things all about the house if the door happens to be open. Many a man has been badly frightened by him, as well as many children, when coming upon him in a dark road, but the fox can assume human form and also enter into the body of a man. If the fox lives near a graveyard he can become a beautiful maiden, also. We have had many people in this district who have been possessed by a fox, who acted exactly like that dread animal, barking, running away from dogs and losing all human attributes."

"I can't see what good that does the fox," said Tomoyo, smiling.

His parents held up their hands in horror. The priest went on:

"If you stray abroad at night you will soon lose that smile of contempt! You may meet the awful Kama-itachi!"

"And who is he?" asked the boy.

"That is the sickle-imp, a demon who cuts off women's hair and wounds men in the arms and legs."

"Well, that's worse than what the fox does," said Tomoyo. "If I meet him I'll run."

"Yes, and he will trip you up and bruise you!" cried his mother, shuddering.

"You must flee to the shade of a yenoki tree," said the priest.

"But I don't know a yenoki tree from an ash-tree," said Tomoyo. "I'll have to learn all about trees, too, I suppose, in order to keep off all these spooks and things."

"Certainly," said the priest. "You must learn what plants will charm the demons and cure pains and aches, such as how to use the oak-leaf for toothache and the yenoki leaf for chills, the cedar and camphor leaves for nightmare and stomach-ache and so forth. Pieces of sacred tombstones ground to powder cure consumption, and cherry-bark will make you invisible to Oni."

"Who's that gentleman?" asked the irreverent boy.

"He is another demon; horned, with an awful mouth filled with sharp fangs, glaring eyes, flat nose, three-fingered hands and three-toed feet with silver nails, and he wears a tiger skin."

"Gee!" cried Tomoyo. "Did you ever see him?"

"Ninigi forbid!" cried the priest with a shudder, covering his eyes with his hand. "I hope I never will, but I can show you a fine portrait of him painted three hundred years ago by Goshimaki, the great artist."

"Is he the worst demon of all?" asked Tomoyo.

"Oh, no; there is a far greater and more terrible one, called the Tengu. This one is immense in size and of enormous strength. With the body of a man he has the face and wings of a great black bird, and when he moves it is as a storm. Some say that the Tengu is a woman, and that she has ears like an elephant, a nose so long that she can hang over on it and she flies a thousand miles without tiring. Her teeth bite through iron. I know not but that there may be female Tengus, but I am sure of the male one. Even now, of late, he has been heard from in the mountains of Yamanashi, which is somewhere in the West, I know not where."

"Oh, I know where it is," said Tomoyo.

"What!" exclaimed the priest. "Do you know about a place you have never seen?"

"Certainly. Didn't I study geography, and wouldn't I study most about Japan, after the United States? Certainly. I can draw a map of this country like a map-maker. But I would just like to see that picture of an Oni, if you will show it to me."

Father Yorimasa showed him the picture, and it was terrifying enough to make a cat shiver, but the Shamakira family scarcely dared to look closely at it for fear of its baneful influence. Then the priest showed a picture of a Tengu, an awful creature, as

impossible as it was hideous, and Tomoyo, taking out his pencil, made a sketch of it which caused his parents and sisters to regard him with some awe, especially when he wrote in English what the priest had said beneath the picture. They were much impressed, because none of them could do more than sign their names.

"The Tengu," said Father Yorimasa, "will dart down upon a man and carry him away sometimes, but he usually bewitches men and entices them to the mountains, from whence they return, many days afterward, with all their wits gone. This happened over in Hiizu-san only last year to a man named Kiuchi. I saw him when he returned from the mountains and he was surely demented."

"Maybe something else got him," suggested Tomoyo. "Jim-jams, or he went nutty, eh?"

"I suppose those are American demons? Perhaps they have power here, but probably not," said the priest.

"Say, I wonder what you folks will say when you see an automobile whizzing past!" exclaimed Tomoyo. "My friend, Peter Hughes, is going to bring his machine here next month and we are to take a journey all over Japan, and if you don't run for some of your spells with the most ginger in them, then I'll lose my guess. How many more bogies can you trot out?"

"I cannot understand the boy's words," said Father Yorimasa. "He speaks as one making riddles."

"Well, I am obliged to you for the instruction," said Tomoyo, and then he gave the priest a dollar, which caused that worthy old man to fall into a profuse perspiration, as that sum was more than he had received in two months as salary.

"If I see a Tengu," added the boy, "I'll take a pop at him with my revolver and perhaps knock him. If I do, I'll bring him up and we will have him stuffed and set up in the temple."

Then he followed his parents, leaving the priest looking after him with a funny smile on his face, for the smart old fellow knew very well what nonsense he had been talking and admired the bright, untrifled lad.

Mr. Shamakira was silent, for he had many fearful apprehensions in regard to his son's safety in that land so full of all sorts of demons, but he took care to touch the trunk of every sacred tree which was passed on the way home. Even there they still talked of other spooky things, such as the dog-demon and the witch-cat, of rats that charm babies and bring money into the house; also the Namazu, a giant catfish that is buried in the earth and when it moves its tail causes the earthquakes that afflict that land.

When Tomoyo asked why it never worried America they shook their heads in silence, and when he told them how ridiculous it was to suppose a fish held up the world they looked at him in wonder, for, although he explained that he had journeyed completely around the world, they could not comprehend that it was round at all.

"You may laugh at us, but it is wrong," said his mother. "We know there are all sorts of demons."

"Surely," added his father. "Why, there are families here who have the blood of dog-demons in their veins. Nobody will marry into such families, and, for that matter, into no family until this is looked into. If one of these people but looks at food and covets it the food spoils at once."

"Huh! What else do you know about them?" asked Tomoyo. "How do you know one of them from an ordinary person?"

"The priest knows. Still there are many ways of distinguishing them. The most common trait that a dog-demon man has is an outrageous desire always to have the very best of everything at once."

"He has!" laughed the boy. "There must be a lot of them in the United States, for pretty nearly everybody there has that failing."

His father shuddered again and made a mystic mark in the air. When Tomoyo asked the meaning of the gesture, he replied:

"I made the sign or mark that means 'Hence, demon, for I fear that your words will bring a curse upon us.'"

"But you also whispered something," persisted Tomoyo.

"Yes, I repeated the potent words of the mystic phrase, 'A descendant of Sayemon Kenjuro of Isuma, as we are taught to do in times of great peril.'"

Tomoyo looked at him in amazement and wonder. Then he said: "Why not say 'Aina anana mona miiko'?"

"That sounds very well, also," replied his father. "I will learn that spell also, if you will teach it to me."

Tomoyo was so disgusted that he went to bed, although he had fully intended to go abroad just to see if there really were badgers about, as he had never seen one of those interesting animals, which somewhat resembles our woodchuck or ground-hog.

The next day after a good sleep he felt more like overlooking the beliefs of his frightened family, although he had lived in certain places in America or England he might have met many people fully as credulous and as timid. He found his mother when he arose in the act of climbing a short ladder, and when he went to her assistance and asked her what she was doing, she replied:

"I am going to see how the soja bean is thriving."

"Going to have it for breakfast?" he asked.

She got down from the ladder and stared at him; then she said: "I am trying to cure your father's wen."

"Gee!" exclaimed Tomoyo. "With the ladder or the bean?"

Then Mrs. Shamakira explained to her ignorant son that it was a charm. The soja bean is rubbed upon the wen on the seventh of July, and then it is planted—the bean, not the wen, remember—in the hollow of the second tile on the first row of the southern side of the roof, and when the bean begins to sprout boiling water is poured upon it so that it withers away, and the wen disappears at the same time. Do not suppose for a moment that I am inventing all these things, for this is actually done, as are all things I tell you about, in Japan to-day. I have seen them all myself.

When Tomoyo's mother also told him that his father was that moment abroad seeking a white dog, whose blood was to be smeared upon all the entrances to the house to protect its inmates from the evil that might come from Tomoyo's jests, he grew indignant; but realizing that it was simply impossible to alter their beliefs, he resolved to prevent such useless cruelty. Taking out of his pocket a wrinkled horse-chestnut which he had carried from America to show to his parents as one of the American products, he held it up and said:

"All your precautions are unnecessary, for I already have a charm that protects us all from every form of evil. This is the sacred horse-chestnut, or 'Buckeye,' and whoever carries it is secure even from whangdoodles or jabberwocks."

His mother was so delighted that she ran off to search for Mr. Shamakira and tell him the good news, and in a few minutes Tomoyo saw them returning, both of their faces showing great relief.

"Why didn't you tell me before?" asked his father, after he had held the sacred buckeye, smelled it and rubbed it on his forehead. "Will this prevent choking on a fishbone so that you don't have to say a spell? Will it ward off the hicoughs as well as burning moxa? Will it cure nose-bleeding as well as putting on the head a piece of paper folded into eight folds and dipped in fresh well-water? Is it as serviceable as writing one's name on paper and throwing it into the river for headaches?"

"Beats 'em all clean out of sight!" said Tomoyo, earnestly. "Only it must never be breathed on by a tadpole or it will shrink into nothing!"

"That settles it, for it sounds like a real Japanese prescription," and all of the family almost worshiped the dried up buckeye after that.

As time passed Tomoyo became known all over the district as the boy who was not afraid of demons and hobgoblins, and people stared at him in wonder wherever he went. He would roam abroad in the cool autumn nights far from home and through the deep woods, or away up in the mountains seeking for the wary fox with his shotgun, hoping to come upon Mr. Badger, too, but he never found either animal, which soon convinced his parents and relatives that he was deceived and avoided by these creatures. The whole village slept now in peace, for with such a guardian as the magic buckeye what was to be dreaded?

At the end of the month came Tomoyo's uncle from far away Hitachi, on the seashore, Hirata Ichikawa, who had a dire tale to tell about a Tengu. The same day also arrived Peter Hughes with his automobile, and the two set the town wild.

How He Captured One of the Most Powerful Spirits and Then Brought His Family Here to Live and Make Money

Uncle Hirata was in love, but the Tengu had come in the night and placed a writing on his door warning him to forsake his girl, Ozone Kitchi, at once, or be troubled mightily. She also was warned, but neither paid any attention to the mandate; another came, and then one night Ozone met the awful thing on the road. He was black and tall, with a hawk-like face, and his inky-hued wings swept the ground as he moved toward her. Ozone fainted as she reached her home, and the next day all Hitachi shut up shop and stayed indoors.

Then Uncle Hirata heard about his nephew Tomoyo and his powers and came to ask for help. Peter Hughes was anxious to start off that night for Hitachi, as he had run over a cat on the road and knew that he would have the whole population after him, as that is a dreadful catastrophe in Japan. So it was decided before they slept to start by daylight.

When they came to Hitachi Uncle Hirata directed them to his house, and there they found the mayor and all the officials, who welcomed them with speeches and other ceremonies. The Tengu had been seen the night before by some children as it went up the mountain, and all were terrified. Tomoyo, after he had shown them the wonderful nut, told them to wait until night and then he and Peter would hunt the Tengu.

At night they had a sort of meeting called a hiyaku-monogatari, where a hundred imps in a circle surrounded them and each told a story about hobgoblins, after each of which a light was put out and when the last one vanished some good spirit was expected to come and assist them; but by nine o'clock nothing having happened, Tomoyo arose and said it was time to go Tengu-hunting.

It was very dark in the road, shaded as it was by great trees, and without lighting the lamps on the automobile they moved up toward the mountain very silently behind Ozone, who had been induced to go ahead in the hope that the demon would be tempted to appear. She carried a red paper lantern, which shook in her trembling hand like a firefly, but which made all darker around the circle of ruddy light.

Finally they came to a spot where they drew the automobile up under the trees to wait, but immediately they heard a noise from the village below, shouts, cries and shrieks breaking the silence suddenly. They suspected at once that a demon had appeared there, and in a few minutes they saw something coming rapidly up the road. As it neared them they could distinguish the form of a man, very tall and with a strangely-shaped head, bearded and showing the Tengu as plainly as in daylight.

"There he comes," whispered Peter, getting out the shotgun. "I'll take a crack at him."

"No," said Tomoyo, "wait and we will follow him. He is on stilts—see? He can't go very far after he strikes the rough hillside."

A moment afterward they were moving along behind him silently, but soon they hastened, for they heard Ozone scream. They came bowling along, and as they turned a corner saw the girl in the grasp of the demon. He had alighted from his stilts and seized her and was about to carry her up the mountain-side. A sharp toot from the automobile horn caused him to turn in affright, to see that strange object pursuing him. Tomoyo was running the machine, and Peter had his camera ready, and as the demon turned he touched off his flash-light pistol with a snap, he touched off his flash-light and showing the Tengu as plainly as in daylight.

The demon started, dropped the girl, and in his fright ran back down the road running straight toward his home, as all terrified creatures, whether animals or men, always do.

The boys quickly picked Ozone up, placed her in the automobile and then pursued the demon at full speed. So rapidly did they go they scarcely perceived one of the wings lying in the road before it was passed, and then, before they could abate their speed, they came upon him running, but somewhat slower, toward the town. The automobile hit him as Tomoyo checked the speed and it sent him flying into the air, turning a dozen summersaults over and over until he rolled into the ditch beside the road.

Just then Uncle Hirata appeared, armed with a long sword, for he had followed the demon up hill, and he arrived as Peter lighted the automobile lamps, which showed the demon all tangled up in his own remaining wing and groaning dismally. Hirata instantly tore the great bird head from him and then shouted:

"It is Oka Yakoya, the blacksmith! Oh, the villain! He has pretended to be the Tengu! Then he wanted to cut Oka's head off at once."

Tomoyo bundled the man into the automobile and carried him to the village, where the people soon surrounded him with all sorts of exclamations of amazement. The blacksmith was bruised all over, and black and blue from head to foot, but he was quite conscious and very much frightened, for he was in danger of being sent to prison.

He confessed that he had played at being the demon in order to frighten the lovers into separating, so that he might, perhaps, secure the lovely Ozone; and he had made his wings of leather and the bird-head, according to the pictures in the books, to make his appearance more hideous, but he promised, if they released him, to leave Hitachi at once and forever. So he was allowed to go home, while the people, delighted to find that the demon was not real, made a feast of rejoicing and forgave the bad blacksmith. Next day, after Uncle Hirata and Ozone were married, Tomoyo and Peter went away carrying with them the blessings of all.

But Tomoyo had made up his mind that he had enough of bogies and demons, so when the trip was concluded, he returned to his home and then bade his family pack up, for he wished them all to come to America and learn how to get along without charms and incantations. They went with him, and now, in their little Japanese store, they are making more money than they ever saw before, while Mr. Shamakira declares that he simply has no time for anything but business, which is only another way of saying that charms don't work in this country.

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